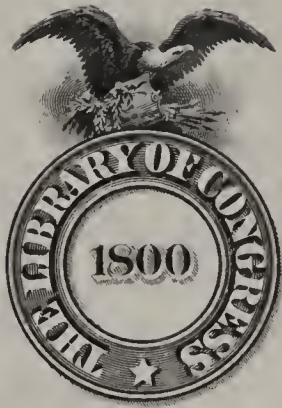


BOBBY LYNX
of **ROUND TOP**
ELLEN D. WANGNER



THE ROUND TOP BOOKS



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Leaped to a big, hollow log lying half-buried in the deep snow. Page 99.

THE ROUND-TOP BOOKS

BOBBY LYNX OF ROUND-TOP

By
— ELLEN (D. WANGNER



ILLUSTRATIONS BY
HENRY WANGNER

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~~CHAS.~~
~~W. Fisher~~
JUN 15 1922

PREFACE

IN telling the story of Bobby Lynx of Round-Top, I have tried to give a clear picture of the actual life of a lynx and the real dangers that beset his pathway. If it seems hard to have Bobby Lynx try to catch Mollie Rabbit, we must remember that he is not being just unkind and cruel but that he is only doing exactly what Mother Nature has taught him to do. When he kills a partridge or has a fierce fight with the Stranger Lynx, again he is only obeying Nature's laws.

Mother Nature has very wonderful laws and, though they may seem hard and cruel to us, yet, when we understand them, we will see how good, how *very* good they are. If nothing ever ate up

the rabbits, there would soon be so many of them that Round-Top could not hold them all and they would have to swarm down on The Plain and, very soon, they would need still more room and they would eat up all the growing things! And this is true of the field-mice or the bears, the porcupines or the woodchucks. Now,—do you see how wise Mother Nature is?

When you stop and realize that all nature is just a vast workshop, where even the stones and the rocks are working every day and where all the animals and the plants and the trees and rivers and the ice and the rains and the snows are working—working—working—and that this work never stops, day or night, *then* you will understand why there must be many, many laws to keep this mighty workroom in good, running order.

And I can make no kinder wish for you,

readers, big and little, than to hope that you will some day learn to know this big workroom of the Out-of-doors and understand the many wonderful things going on there.

THE AUTHOR.

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Bobby Lynx of Round-Top

CHAPTER I

MOTHER LYNX GETS HER BREAKFAST

MOTHER LYNX padded softly down the dim forest paths at the bottom of old Round-Top Hill. It was early morning and, as Mrs. Rabbit peeped out from the hollow 'neath the tall spruce tree to see whether she might safely scamper out for some young, tender roots, she caught sight of Mrs. Lynx. Mrs. Rabbit softly and noiselessly pushed back into her burrow with its warm nest at the end. There she carefully looked her four babies over, her poor, little heart going pit-a-pat for fear one of them might have disobeyed her and

stolen out of the little rabbit home and into the path of Mrs. Lynx. The babies were all safely asleep and Mrs. Rabbit, as softly as a bit of thistledown, crept back to the opening of her house and peeked out among the tangled roots of the spruce.

Mrs. Lynx was still pad-padding along, her head held high as she sniffed the soft spring winds blowing down old Round-Top's rocky slopes. There were delicious odors of swelling buds and opening wild flowers,—warm, soft, moist smells from the marsh at the foot of the hill. But Mrs. Lynx didn't care for these smells at all. Her stiff, black whiskers moved this way and that as her nose twitched up and down, seeking for the particular smell she wanted,—rabbit or young birds or even a squirrel. Most anything would do for breakfast, for she had not been able all night to find even a tiny field-mouse and, as the sun crept over the

tree-tops, she slowly turned around to pad back to her den. There would be no breakfast *this* morning.

Mollie Rabbit's whiskers twitched nervously as she watched. Of all the creatures of the Hill, she feared Mrs. Lynx and her family most of all and she scampered for joy in the hollow spruce as she saw Mrs. Lynx turn back along the grey rocks, at the foot of which were the springs and marsh that marked the beginning of the Long Pond.

As Mrs. Lynx crept over the rocks, Mollie Rabbit shuddered as she noted the thick, stocky legs with their cruel claws and the squat, chunky body that was just a bundle of steel muscles hidden beneath the shaggy coat of grey fur. Mrs. Lynx turned around for one last look and Mollie Rabbit "froze" as she saw Mrs. Lynx's face with its very wicked-looking set of teeth and the heavy, grizzled whiskers on

the sides of her head and the tassels of stiff, dark hairs that tufted her ears!

Mother Lynx was very thin, for the winter had been a hard one. The cold had been very severe and there had been many storms that had piled the snow in high, white drifts along the foot of the Hill and filled the plain with an even carpet of white, many feet thick. Food had been hard to get. Never had there been a worse winter for the little Forest-people on Round-Top and many and many a night had Mrs. Lynx hunted without getting one bite to eat! The partridges that she loved so well, buried themselves so deep down in the snow that she could not find them and the rabbits stayed in their snug, warm burrows, nibbling at such roots as they could get without venturing out into the deep drifts.

There had been tracks of plenty of deer down in the Alder Swamp but, somehow,

Mother Lynx could not get even one. She would lie stretched out on the arm of a beech tree, her grey fur matching the bark so perfectly that she was almost invisible and there she would watch, hoping that some deer would come down the snowy runway beneath her. Although Mrs. Lynx knew that she was getting old, she was so hungry that she would not have been afraid to attack even a cross, old buck had she been so fortunate as to see one.

All of these long days and nights of hunger had made her very thin and very, very cross and ugly and oh,—how she wished she could have some breakfast this nice spring morning! And then, the soft winds blowing down the hillside brought a sound so close to her that she instantly flattened out against the rock,—so flat, indeed, that she looked like a part of it. Down she crouched, every muscle tense,

—ready for a spring. Her short, stubby tail twitched ever so slightly and her big grey-green eyes seemed to turn black as she intently watched a fallen tree at the foot of the rock. There was a short scuffle in a drift of snow that the warm, spring sun had not yet melted and then she saw a slim grey-brown animal drawing a plump partridge from beneath the log. Over the drift he dragged her to a flat piece of rock right beneath Mrs. Lynx. It was a weasel,—as Mrs. Lynx knew well.

Now,—all the Forest-people hated Jimmy Weasel. All the field-mice and the young birds and the rabbits and the squirrels,—oh, how they hated him! And well they might, for he was sly and tricky and cruel. He could creep down into the most carefully hidden rabbit burrow and catch a dear, soft baby rabbit before Mrs. Rabbit could do one thing to defend her

little family. He could crawl into Mrs. Grey Squirrel's house and capture her babies or even herself before she could as much as squeak. Mrs. Woodchuck feared him, even more than she did Mrs. Lynx because Mother Lynx could not squeeze down into the winding hallways of her home and that was something Jimmy Weasel just loved to do and did do many times. A nice, fat baby woodchuck pleased Jimmy Weasel very much indeed. And the poor, little field-mice just squeaked and squealed with terror when they saw his horrid, green eyes peering into their carefully hidden house in the warm, soft ground! Jimmy seemed to love to tease and torment the poor field-mice. He would kill as many as he could of the family and then scatter their carefully gathered stores of nuts and seeds as if he delighted in being just as mean as he knew how to be! None of the smaller

animals or the birds ever felt safe from him for he could go in all the nicely dug out tunnels, climb all the trees and he could even swim if he needed to, so you can see that the little Forest-people had cause to hate and fear him.

Even Mother Lynx didn't care for him,—he had *such* wicked little eyes and he could viciously bite even her tough old paws with those sharp teeth of his. Besides,—she didn't like the taste of him very well. But he was better than no breakfast at all and that fat partridge would make a delicious breakfast for her two kittens.

As Mollie Rabbit saw Mrs. Lynx flatten out on the rock, she knew what it meant,—Mother Lynx had seen or smelled something that meant *breakfast!* Now Mrs. Rabbit was a very wise mother rabbit at most times, but a very foolish one at other times and, just now, she was

going to be very foolish, indeed! For she was so curious,—so *very* curious, in fact, to see what Mother Lynx was after that she crept noiselessly out of the front door of the Spruce Tree House and hopped up the hill, where she could look down and see what it was that Mrs. Lynx was watching. Mollie Rabbit's little heart was beating fast with fear, but her curiosity just urged her to hop along until she sat by an old pine stump right above the hollow where Jimmy Weasel was getting ready to have his breakfast. If Mrs. Lynx had not been so busily engaged watching Jimmy and the partridge, she would surely have seen foolish Mollie, and if she had,—poor, silly, little Mother Rabbit could never have reached her burrow before Mrs. Lynx would have had her. For Mother Lynx preferred rabbit for breakfast to even a fat partridge.

But Mollie had hopped along so quietly

and was so exactly the color of the pine stump and Mother Lynx was so busily engaged in watching Jimmy that she did not see her at all. And then,—Mollie Rabbit gave a tiny squeak, for Mrs. Lynx sprang. It was truly a beautiful sight to see her,—one instant each muscle in her body seemed to coil tightly like a spring and then, they just shot her out over the rocks, free and clear, a graceful ball of grey fur that dropped like a flash right on Jimmy Weasel.

CHAPTER II

BOBBY AND TOMMY HAVE THEIR FIRST LESSON OUTDOORS

MOTHER RABBIT ran back to her burrow as fast as her soft, brown paws could carry her, first gathering a mouthful of delicious budding twigs for her little family. The rabbit babies were all safe and sound and Mother Rabbit sat right down to tell them of the awful things she had seen and to warn them never, *never* to go out from the Spruce Tree House without her. Mollie and all the babies were glad that Jimmy Weasel was gone,—only,—they knew that Jimmy had many, many dozens of cousins and aunts and uncles and nephews and nieces and brothers and sisters, so,—sad to say,—they would have to be just as careful as ever!

The sun was shining right into the play-room in the roots of the spruce, now, so Mother Rabbit took them for their first trip up there. Oh,—how big the world looked as they peered out from among the spruce tree roots and how *smelly* the wind was and oh!—how much, how *very* much they would have to learn before they could go with Mother Rabbit frisking about on the hillside! The wind was bringing a new smell, now, to their wriggly, little noses,—a smell that they did not quite like,—a smell of Mrs. Lynx eating up Jimmy Weasel, and, as Mother Rabbit told them never, *never* to forget that smell, their little noses wriggled very nervously and they crept very hurriedly down into their safe little burrow. They had had enough of the big world for that day!

Mrs. Lynx felt very much better, now. The hunger-ache in her stomach was

nearly gone,—an ache she had felt very often all that terrible winter, especially after Father Lynx had gone hunting one cold night and had never returned. Father Lynx had been a great hunter and even when she failed to find anything to eat, *he* would be sure to bring back something to the den for them both. All of the animals on Round-Top had been afraid of Father Lynx. Not one of them could beat him in a fight and they all knew it and let him alone! Many a bit of food had been hastily left by Renny Fox and Jimmy Weasel's family when they had heard the piercing cry of either Father or Mother Lynx echo through the forest on those cold, winter nights! And Father and Mother Lynx had greedily grabbed at the choice morsels abandoned by Renny and Jimmy. But, after Father Lynx had gone,—the cold became keener and keener and the drifts and snow deeper and deeper

until few animals dared to venture out and Mother Lynx began to think that she was left all alone in the forest. She had been very happy when, at last, old Winter began to take his snow-drifts and icicles away with him and the warm sun came again, for, now, she had two kittens in her den to get food for. So, after she had eased some of her own hunger-ache that morning with Jimmy Weasel, she carried the fat partridge into her house for Bobby-cat Lynx and his brother Tommy-cat.

Now,—Bobby's and Tommy's house was a truly wonderful place, so wisely chosen and so carefully hidden by Mrs. Lynx, that *you* would have walked right by it and never have seen it! For Bobby's and Tommy's house was in a big hollow tree right in front of a huge pile of rocks that looked as if they had fallen heels over head down Round-Top Hill and had



Bobby's house was in a big, hollow tree, in front of a huge pile of rocks. Page 22.

landed close to a marshy spot in a tangled thicket. The back door of the house opened right into a big cave formed by the rocks as they snuggled back against the mountainside as if they were trying to keep out of the marshy, alder swamp that grew right up to the Hollow Tree on the other side. In the big pine trunk was the warmest kind of a nest and, if danger should come, all they had to do was to leap right out into the rocky cavern and climb and clamber up and out of a well-hidden hole in the heart of the tangled thicket. It was a fine back door and Mrs. Lynx was very proud of her home. And,—oh, how proud she was of Bobby and Tommy,—who were two of the finest kittens that ever lived! At least,—Mother Lynx thought so as she watched them snarling and growling over their partridge breakfast. When nothing was left but a pile of feathers, Mrs. Lynx washed them care-

fully with her rough, red tongue, smoothing down their soft baby fur until they grew quite drowsy. Then they all curled up in the Hollow Tree House while the rising sun grew warmer and warmer until the little house was as hot as even a little cat wants it to be when he takes his nap. Even Mrs. Lynx took a long, long sleep for she was very tired after her long trips for food and the sun was shining on the other side of the tree when, at last, she yawned and stretched out her paws,—first one and then another, opening and closing her sharp claws. Then she rose and Bobby and Tommy knew that their rest time was over. As they stood on their short, thick legs, their paws looked much too large for them and they bumped and wobbled around the Hollow Tree House very much like two little tabby-cats when they are first learning to walk. Their tails were very short and stubby and their little

ears looked very funny with their tiny tufts of stiff hairs at the top.

Bobby's and Tommy's eyes had been opened now for quite a while, they were getting very much steadier on their legs and, as Mother Lynx watched them leap and play in the Hollow Tree House and saw how they could roll each other over and over and how strongly they could push against her,—she decided that it was about time to give them their first outdoor lesson. So,—*very* cautiously, she led them out of the house to the warm hillside where the tangled birch thicket safely screened them in on all sides. Bobby and Tommy slunk along very close to their mother. Oh, how many curious sounds there were,—and what peculiar smells and how cold the earth felt beneath their soft paws,—not like the floor in the Hollow Tree House at all and,—oh,—how big,—how *very* big the mountain was! Bobby,

blinked and blinked as he tried to look way up to the top of the Hollow Tree. Never,—*never* could he climb to the top as Mother Lynx had told him he would some day.

As a red squirrel ran chattering angrily along a big branch and leaped lightly across a wide space to a hickory tree,—Bobby grew quite dizzy. Never could *he* do anything like that! In fact,—he just was not going to try! Bobby was scared, as scared as any kitten you ever saw! He forgot how big and strong he had felt in the Hollow Tree House when he had rolled Tommy over,—forgot his sharp claws of which he had been so proud and he just snuggled up beside his mother's warm, shaggy coat and *cried!*

“Meow! Meow!” he wailed, just like a frightened tabby-cat. And then, Tommy became scared, and he cried, too, and oh! how cross Mother Lynx was! And right

then and there she gave them one of the most important lessons a little Bobby-cat can learn,—that at all times in the forest a little cat must keep perfectly still and not make the slightest sound! She cuffed Tommy's ears with her heavy paws and she rolled Bobby over and bit him,—not *too* hard, but quite hard enough, in his furry neck! Bobby and Tommy learned their lesson very well and when Sally Red Squirrel, up in the hickory, chattered and scolded at them, they sat perfectly still and looked fierce just like their mother. And only their wiggling noses and twitching little whiskers told that they were really not brave and fierce at all, but just two very badly scared little cats! There were so many, many noises to startle a poor, little cat,—water dripped, dripped somewhere near by,—limbs of trees rustled and rattled as the wind brushed them against each other, sticks and twigs

dropped from the trees as the birds and squirrels darted about and a little dry leaf, on one of the small birch trees, flapped and snapped until it was very hard work for Bobby to keep from crying out loud again.

The world wasn't at all the place it had looked to be from the snug Hollow Tree House and Bobby and Tommy were very glad when their mother told them that lesson-time was over and took them home again. Even the big cave, that had always looked as if it were such an attractive place, did not interest them at all and they were very glad to snuggle down in the warm Tree House and go to sleep just as their mother told them to do.

Mother Lynx purred them to sleep with a song that they were learning very well indeed. Every night they had to sing it with her, but to-night they were so very tired,—she just sang it all by herself:

“Night is the time for hunting and eating ;
Day is the time for resting and sleeping.”

And then Mother Lynx told them to lie perfectly still all night while she went out to try to find them something good to eat for their breakfast. Mother Lynx was really very much pleased with her day's work. Surely her kittens were very smart and it was really wonderful the way they had learned the Keep-Quiet Rule. She was especially proud of Bobby, for he had walked home on his stubby legs as cautiously as a mother cat could expect him to. Tommy was very bright, too, but he had made an awful noise, Mother Lynx thought, as he had slipped and slid and rolled when the dry sticks got under his clumsy little feet. However,—they had done very well and Mother Lynx gave them each a final lick with her warm tongue before she started out on her nightly hunt.

CHAPTER III

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE TIMBER WOLF

THE sun had sunk down below the crest of old Round-Top and down by the Hollow Tree House, long dark shadows crept along the hillside. The air was warm and Mother Lynx felt sure that the forest paths would be filled with the little forest-dwellers, glad to leave their burrows and come out to frisk and dance and play in the warm, spring night. From the marsh came the soft trillings of the frogs as they seemed to say,—“Sleep—sleep—go to sleep!” And the reply from the naughty, young frogs,—“No sleep! No sleep! No sleep!” Every once in a while, a cross, grumpy, old grandfather frog would say in his deep voice,—“Ker-

chung! Go—to—bed!” From every little hummock in the marsh came these chirpings,—so many hundreds of them trilling and singing, that it seemed as if there were millions of little bells tinkling.

Mrs. Lynx listened and a soft, purry rumble crept up in her throat. She didn't like frogs very well,—they were really not very good to eat,—but their singing and trilling were very soothing to her. Besides,—they made such an echoing, jingling noise that even the quickest-eared fox or rabbit would not be able to hear her as she slipped through the shadows. She felt sure that she was going to be able to get a wonderful meal for herself and to bring home a delicious breakfast for Bobby and Tommy. Now,—Renny Fox and Jimmy Weasel were thinking the same thing and poor Mrs. Woodmouse and Mollie Rabbit were very much alarmed. Mollie Rabbit

tucked her babies into their warm nest and then sat down and nibbled some birch buds very thoughtfully.

Now, as we have said once before,—Mollie Rabbit was a very wise little mother but even *her* wisdom could not make her quite understand the plans of old Mother Nature very well. She really felt that it must be quite all right for Jimmy Weasel's family to eat up the field-mice and groundhogs because these same field-mice and groundhogs ate up just the roots and clovers that *she* needed for herself and her own little family. Of course,—Mollie wouldn't actually *wish* to have Mrs. Lynx or Renny Fox or the Weasels eat up a field-mouse or a groundhog! She never, never would *wish* for such a thing as that but,—if old Mother Nature had made these animals want to eat mice and red squirrels and grey squirrels and groundhogs, why,—Mollie felt,—it was

probably all right because it just had to be. Besides,—that arrangement left lots of delicious roots and clover for Mollie's family and her very numerous relatives on Round-Top. What she couldn't understand was why anything should be willing to or want to eat up a *rabbit*! That was the hard puzzle that Mollie had to solve. She could not understand that Mrs. Lynx was not being merely cruel when she sprang on a plump rabbit or a partridge. Poor Mollie could not see that Mother Nature had given the Lynx family and the Foxes and the Weasels their natures and tastes and that, after all, Mother Lynx was only doing just as Nature told her to do when she went hunting. So,—little Mrs. Rabbit gave up trying to solve the puzzle and went out and had a glorious dance in the woodland path, snatching a delicious root here and a bud there and, altogether,

having a fine time. But,—just as she was beginning to feel a bit tired and ready to go home, what should she see, right in the path behind her, but two glowing eyes that looked like coals of fire! Mrs. Lynx was also in the woodland path that night!

For just one instant, Mollie “froze” and pretended to play dead and then she realized that would not save her *this* time. Nothing but her brave little heart, pounding so furiously with fear and her stout little legs, could possibly help her in this moment of terrible danger and, with one mighty bound, she bobbed away down the path, just as Mrs. Lynx sprang. The cruel paws with their long claws missed Mollie by the merest tip of her white tail and Mollie bobbed and bounced down the path, leaping this way and that to avoid the dreadful fate that she felt was behind her. As she darted toward the little Tree House that had never seemed to her quite

so safe and snug and greatly-to-be-desired as now, two other gleaming eyes peered at her from behind the Hollow Spruce that she had believed so safe! It was Renny Fox who was also hunting rabbit and who had seen poor, frightened Mollie dashing down the hillside. Quick as a flash, she turned, almost facing Mrs. Lynx, poised for another spring and, just as the grey cat shot toward her, Mollie dived, head first, into the carefully hidden back-door of her burrow, escaping the sharp claws by just one squeak.

Mother Lynx screeched with anger. The hunger-ache was very hard to bear once more. One weasel was very little food for a mother-cat who had two kittens! And she had been so sure, so *very* sure of getting this foolish, fat, little rabbit, that she screamed and wailed in her anger and disappointment. There was no animal on Round-Top nor in all the Big Forest that

could give so piercing and wild a cry as could Mrs. Lynx!

Renny Fox, as he heard it, slid behind the Hollow Spruce and slunk away in the friendly darkness,—the bristles standing up on his neck with terror as Mother Lynx gave a long, piercing scream that got lower and lower until it sounded like a sob and a moan, only to rise again,—higher and higher into a shriek that made Renny's legs tremble in terror as he galloped across the Plains.

As Mollie Rabbit heard it, she cuddled tightly in the nest with her babies,—resolving never, never, *never* to go more than a foot away from her front door again! Of course,—she would forget all about that by the next night, but just now, she wouldn't have left her burrow for all the juicy roots on Round-Top. At the front door of her house on the hillside, Mrs. Woodchuck felt the stiff hairs of her

neck rise and bristle as the wild cry of the Lynx reached her and she scurried back into her house. She would not seek for any roots *that* night,—daylight would do well enough for *her*!

Most all the little Forest-people on Round-Top shivered and shook as they listened to Mrs. Lynx shrieking and screaming with rage,—all except the Black Bear, who lived at the top of the mountain and who wasn't afraid of anything and the Porcupine family who knew that if Mrs. Lynx said anything to *them*, they would fill her nose and paws and mouth so full of sharp, pointed quills, that she would be glad enough to let *them* go! Jack Skunk and Mrs. Jack didn't mind very much, either. They had a weapon to defend themselves with that even a Lynx respects. All the baby skunks, however, just whimpered with fear and fright and it was not until Mother Skunk came in and cuddled

up beside them that they could go to sleep again.

For a long, long time Mrs. Lynx screamed and screeched, acting very much like a bad little boy who has been sent upstairs to his room for being naughty and who cries and yells just with rage! That was just the way this big cat cried and yelled. Then, like the little boy usually does, she got tired of it. Crawling up a beech tree, she crept out on a big limb and lay there, listening and smelling,—her ears twitching at every sound, her whiskers moving as the soft night-wind brought the sweet odors of the forest to her.

For a long time she lay stretched out on the beech-limb,—so quiet, that a grey shape that came stealthily creeping along never suspected that she was there at all. It was a gaunt, grey timber-wolf,—the first one seen on Round-Top for a long

time. Mother Lynx did not know it,—but food had been just as scarce for the wolves way back in the mountains as for the little Forest-folk on Round-Top. So hungry had they grown that small bands of them had crept down onto the Plains, hiding in the woods along the Long Pond, venturing out occasionally to catch some stray sheep or cow near the scattered settlements at the far end of the valley. Always cowardly when travelling alone, the wolf hunts in packs when he goes out for food, and Mother Lynx scarcely moved a whisker as she watched the wolf steal slowly and cautiously down the path.

Almost at any moment she expected to see another and yet another of these grey shapes glide along, so she kept perfectly still, as well she knew that even her powerful claws and teeth would avail her nothing against a whole pack. But this wolf was all alone. Separated from his pack,

the most of which had either been shot or trapped by the settlers, he was carefully making his way back to the well-known trails of his own mountain. No call did he give,—well he knew that he was alone and in a strange place. Danger lurked on every side; his only safety lay in stealing along as stealthily as he could and passing the crest of the hill before the sun should catch him.

He sniffed eagerly as he caught the scent of deer on the night-wind. Even a lone wolf might dare attack a deer. He threw his head up and sniffed long and carefully and then,—before he could give a cry or one jump,—a grey ball of biting, tearing claws and steel muscles and ripping, cruel teeth, dropped on him from the beech-limb! It was a delicious meal that Mother Lynx had,—the first real breakfast in more time than she liked to think of and she crept home perfectly

happy, carrying a big, juicy bone with her for the kittens.

How Bobby and Tommy growled over that bone,—tossing it up in the air,—pretending that it was alive, leaping and jumping on it when it came down,—catching it with fierce snarls and yelps as it hit the sides of Hollow Tree House and bounced at them! All this pleased Mother Lynx very much indeed,—so much so that she determined, after their nap, to take them out on the hill again to see what new lessons she could teach them. They were growing so rapidly, now, that she knew their playtime was about over and their lessons must begin in earnest. So,—that afternoon when she heard a fight beginning between a bad Red Squirrel-boy and Mrs. Grey Squirrel, she cautiously led the kittens out through the cave and into the tangled thicket. Something might happen so that she could give the little cats

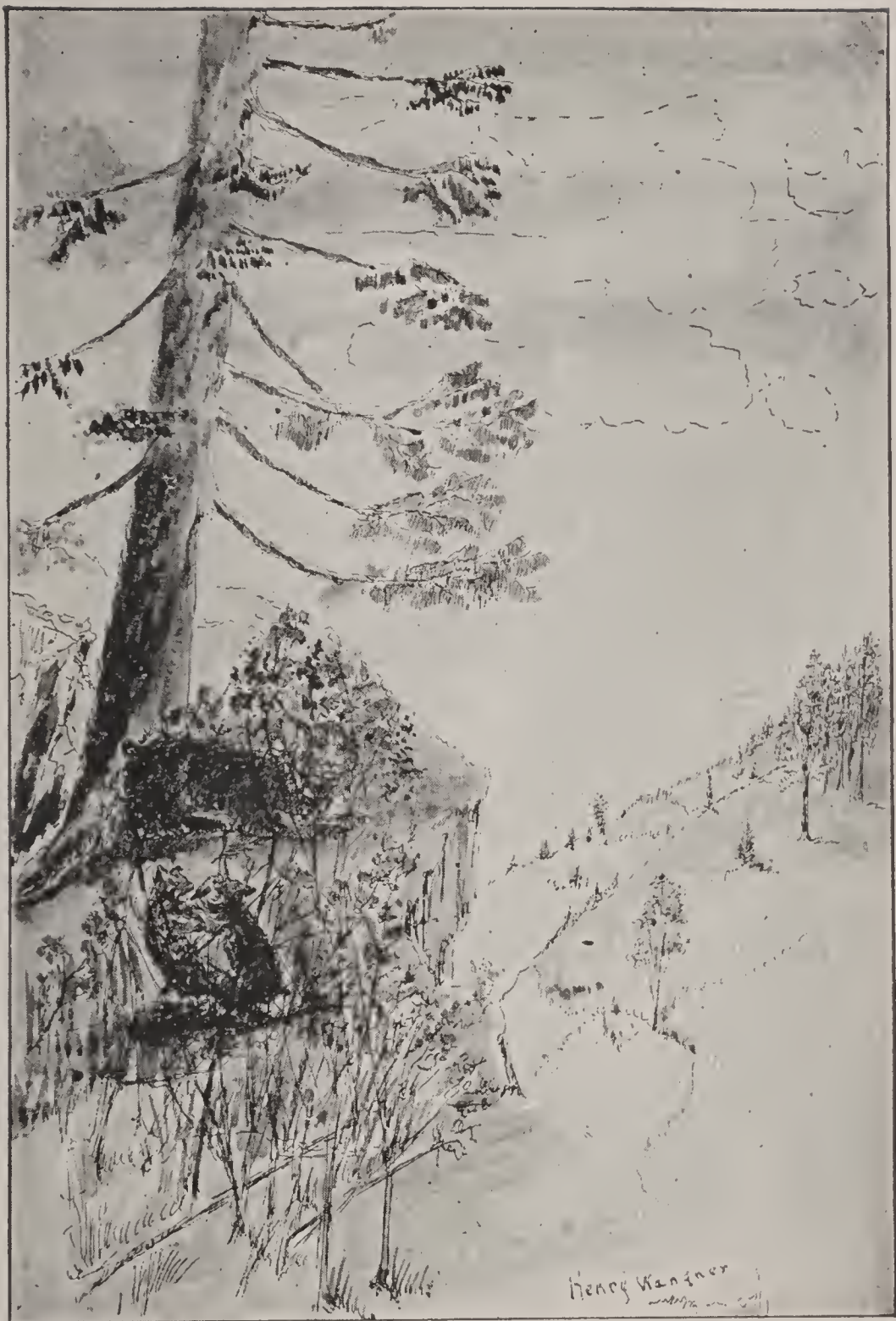
their first lesson in hunting, and, sure enough,—something *did* happen! When that bad, sly, cruel Red Squirrel-boy darted right by Mother Grey Squirrel toward her nest where she had her hoard of nuts for her babies, she chattered in fear and anger. Now, everyone knows that the red squirrels are bad, bad, cruel robbers, but no one knew it quite so well as did Mother Grey Squirrel, whose hoard he was constantly robbing. So, when Robber Red darted toward the nest, Mother Grey chased him and, quicker than a flash, she bit him fiercely in the back leg and, with all her might, threw him off the branch right down into the tangled thicket! Bobby and Tommy jumped in fear as the red squirrel came hurtling down through the bushes. Mrs. Lynx, however, had seen what was happening up in the beech tree and, as Robber Red fell, she struck with her strong

right paw, every claw out. The kittens sprang up in excitement as they saw their mother give a graceful leap and strike the bad squirrel almost before he hit the ground. Never again would *that* robber-squirrel steal birds' eggs nor rob Mrs. Grey Squirrel and oh, — how good he tasted to Bobby and Tommy.

After all,—the big woods were quite interesting, they decided, and when Mrs. Lynx showed them how to climb and they found that their claws could stick into the tree like spikes,—they climbed up and up and up—until Bobby looked down and grew dizzy with fear. Then his brave little legs trembled in terror and he cried! But wise old Mother Lynx just let him cry and cry until he realized that if he were ever to get down at all,—he would just have to manage it all by himself. So,—slipping and sliding, hanging on frantically every few inches and crying,—

then sliding some more, — he finally reached the ground. And then Bobby showed that he was really growing up, — for he caught Jimmy Weasel's bad little brother as he was scurrying recklessly through the thicket after a little field-mouse. Bobby wouldn't even let Tommy share in his meal, but growled angrily at him and even struck at his mother!

Bobby was truly growing up indeed. Mrs. Lynx was very proud of him and she washed both him and Tommy very carefully as she tucked them up in the Hollow Tree House. And now, indeed, did they give their mother a surprise, for they hopped right out again as soon as she had tucked them in and they scampered back into the thicket to climb and play some more. So, out Mother Lynx went and scampered with them, — boxing and playing with them, encouraging them to crawl up the trees after her, — wrestling with



Henry Wagner

They scampered back into the thicket to climb and
play some more. Page 44.

them until they were almost too tired to go to bed, but showing their mother very plainly that they had learned their lessons very well and would soon be able to take care of themselves.

CHAPTER IV

BOBBY'S FIRST ADVENTURE

MOTHER LYNX had not been gone very long when Bobby woke up. A shaft of moonlight had peered right down through the dancing, new leaves and the branches of the trees into the Hollow Tree House and had peeped right into Bobby's face. Tommy was sound asleep,—so Bobby playfully cuffed him with his paw. Outside the Hollow Tree House, the world looked like gold as the moonlight bathed the mountain in its soft beams. Bobby cuffed Tommy some more and rolled him over,—but Tommy was too tired and sleepy to do more than stretch and yawn and then go back to sleep again.

But Bobby was wide awake; the excite-

ment of the afternoon, all the tree-climbing and catching the little Weasel-boy had just filled him full of mischief and he was ready for play. But he wanted a play-fellow! What was the use of sleeping when so much fun could be had? He sprang on Tommy and bit him in his soft, furry neck and caught his short, stubby tail in his teeth and rolled him around until sleepy, little Tommy grew very cross and waked up long enough to bite and growl back. Then they both peered out into the lovely spring night. But just peeking out was not enough for Bobby,—he felt very venturesome and grown up. He could see the very tree he had climbed that afternoon and it didn't look high at all in the moonlight! And its trunk looked like soft, brown velvet where his sharp claws could safely hold on and everything did look so tempting that Bobby put out one little paw on the soft,

warm ground and then another. And, in a moment, he was out of the Hollow Tree House and coaxing Tommy to come out for a scamper. But Tommy only curled up by the opening in the tree and, after watching Bobby very interestedly for a moment or two, he cuddled down in a soft, little ball and was soon sound asleep.

Now,—Bobby knew he was disobeying all the rules his mother had taught him so carefully, but he only intended to play just a moment and then scamper back to bed. The moonlight made big shadows that danced and played in the gentle spring wind and Bobby made big leaps at them, pretending to catch them. And then, acting as if he were badly frightened, he would dash madly back to the Hollow Tree, only to cautiously glide through the thicket again and pounce on another shadow. Little by little, farther and farther, his venturesome dashes car-

ried him until he was at the very edge of the thicket! And there Long Pond shimmered and silvered in the moonlight. Bobby stood on a big rock and looked at it. He had never seen this before, and all the curiosity of his little cat nature made him want to get a little closer and see what it was.

Every little while he would pretend to be scared and dash back into the thicket, but,—there was the Hollow Tree House safe and sound, and out he would come again to watch and puzzle over this long, shimmering thing in the moonlight. Down below him, some new, silvery aspen leaves twinkled and fluttered in the spring wind and Bobby went a few steps down the bank to strike at them with his soft, little paws. A stone rolled down the hillside and, in a flash, he was after it and, almost before he knew it, his feet sank in the marsh at the bottom of the hill. It

was a treacherous place that all of the animals kept away from until the hot summer sun had dried it up, but naughty Bobby didn't know that and he pulled his front feet out, only to find that his back legs were sinking deep in the ooze and water. A big bullfrog near by said "KERCHUNG!" so loudly that Bobby whimpered with fear. And then, giving a hard pull, he leaped out of the sticky, muddy marsh and landed on a thick hummock that held him up. Bobby was badly frightened! He would have cried long and loud but he was afraid to!

He leaped to another grassy tuft, then to another and another and soon he was on dry ground again, but where,—oh, where was the Hollow Tree House! Bobby was sure he knew,—it was back over the edge of the hill,—he was sure of that,—but, how could he ever get there? The wind brought him so many queer smells

that his poor, little nose could not stop wiggling one moment! He started to creep along the hillside, only to cower down in a scared little ball as a twig snapped under his feet with a sharp crack! Little stones and pebbles rolled down the hill as he walked! His tufted ears strained to catch every sound and the dancing aspen leaves did not seem pretty at all now! They seemed glad because he was scared!

Poor Bobby cringed and cowered along, trying to move cautiously as his mother had tried to teach him to do, but, there were so many queer sounds and smells that, at times, he was too frightened to move at all and just cowered down as close to the ground as he could. A big pine tree drooped its heavy, green branches just ahead of him so close to the ground, that it looked like a big green tent, and he was afraid of it,—terribly.

afraid! How could a little cat know what might be under those big, dark boughs or just waiting around them ready to pounce? But pass it he must, so,—he cautiously slid toward it, hoping to pass it safely and get back once more to the dear Hollow Tree House. Step by step he went as carefully as a little cat could, and then,—just as he was almost by it,—there was a sudden terrifying rush of wings, a sharp sting in his forehead as powerful claws tried vainly to clutch him and an awful voice seemed to shout right in his ears,—“To-WHOO-oo!”

It was a huge owl that had been suddenly frightened out of her hiding-place in the big pine. But poor Bobby did not know what it was and, with a loud cry of fear, he dashed for safety in under the big branches and then climbed up the tree as fast as he could. And there he clung, in a crotch of the tree, too frightened to

move! He was afraid this awful thing might be waiting for him just beyond those big branches. Bobby's legs were trembling so that he kept slipping and sliding and his eyes watched this way and that as the big branches tossed in the wind and he could see the brightly lighted hill-side.

Once, he saw a queer little animal go sniffing-snuffling along and his eyes grew big as he watched. What it was he didn't know, but he surely would like to pounce on it! It was a very fortunate thing for Bobby that he was not able to do so, as it was Mrs. Porcupine and she would have filled his little nose and paws and even his mouth so full of sharp, pointed quills, that he would never have wanted to touch *her* again! But Bobby did not know this and he watched her very eagerly as long as he could see her. Then he began to give faint little "meows" way down in his

throat, for oh!—how scared he was and how he wanted to see his mother!

Underneath the tree he heard a scuffling in the pine needles as some wood-mice scampered about, but Bobby was not interested in them at all! The ground looked terribly far away,—too far for him ever to try to climb down again! A rabbit bounced up the mountainside in the moonlight, now growing fainter and fainter, but he wasn't at all interested in rabbits, either. All he thought of was his aching little legs. He did not dare to crawl out on a limb and lie down,—he just clung tightly to the trunk in the crotch of the tree and hung on with every little muscle aching and aching. And,—how sleepy he was! What would he not give to be safely cuddled up in the Hollow Tree House with Tommy and that big, soft, furry creature,—his mother!

He could stand it no longer! Forget-

ting all about the Keep-Quiet Rule,—he meowed and meowed so fast that it sounded like one long howl! The little wood-mice, at the foot of the tree, ran for their lives and the rabbits, playing on the hillside, bounced for home as fast as they could go! Louder and louder Bobby wailed,—opening his little pink mouth as wide as he knew how and letting out one frightened yowl after another. Mother Lynx was hunting way up on the top of the mountain when, suddenly, her quick ears caught the sound of a cry. She wheeled and gave a snarl! 'Again she listened and then, a grey streak, she shot down the mountainside, pausing to listen as the sounds grew louder and closer. Her eyes gleamed with anger as she bounded to the Hollow Tree House and leaped in. Tommy was sound asleep and she at once began to wash him with her warm, red tongue. She had not yet

missed Bobby. Then she stopped washing Tommy and listened. In an instant she bounded out of the house and crept along the hillside.

The moon was gone now and the forest was dark and silent, save for the yells coming from the pine tree. They were growing fainter and fainter. Poor Bobby was just ready to give up when something crashed through the lower branches and a deep, throaty purr-rrh came to him. In another moment his mother was washing his face and purring over him. Quickly leaping to the ground, she called and purred until Bobby felt brave enough to try to get down and, slipping and sliding, he finally managed it. He was a very quiet little cat as he padded along by his mother, answering her soft purrs with faint, baby purrings. When they reached the Hollow Tree Bobby was so very tired he could just

manage to crawl in. He was a very happy little Bobby-cat as he snuggled down beside his mother and went to sleep while she washed and washed and washed his aching body and trembling legs. Bobby had had his first great adventure and, fortunately for him, it had ended happily.

CHAPTER V

HOW BOBBY AND TOMMY LEARNED THE MAN-SMELL

BUT Bobby soon forgot his fright and his and Tommy's muscles grew stronger every day and their baby fears were nearly all gone, now. They had learned to crawl out on the big beech limb and lie there fearlessly and as quiet as mice. They could climb the tallest trees; they knew all the forest smells and could tell, just as well and surely as could Mrs. Lynx herself, when the wind spelled rabbit or a weasel! One smell they had not learned,—the smell of their most terrible enemy,—MAN! And this smell they were to learn one night and never, *never* would they forget it as long as they lived!

It was one lovely night when all the

leaves were out on the trees and the bees had hummed all day around the wild honey-suckle bushes that made the hill-sides pink with their delicate blossoms and filled the air so full of delicious smells, that it was difficult at times to find the other smells that it carried and which the kittens,—large, strong cats by this time, wanted to know. Mrs. Lynx had taken the two cats that night on a long, hard climb over the roughest rocks and most tangled thickets on Round-Top, leading them, finally, across the Ridge that bordered the Plains on the far side, giving them many lessons in noiseless climbing and hunting that she felt they might need some day. She had gone so far that the first bright streaks of the summer dawn were tinting the sky as they stole back along the Ridge. And then, just as she crept out on a big rock that overlooked the farms in the lower part of

the valley, Bobby saw her suddenly stiffen and begin to draw back each foot as slowly and cautiously as she knew how. Right on a rock, across a little ravine, was the most dreaded enemy of all the wild things,—a *man*! As the wind shifted, Bobby and Tommy both caught this new smell and the bristles on their necks rose in terror,—here was something new and fearful and they stood stiff and rigid as they saw their mother trying to crawl back from the big rock unseen. Quick as she had been, the hunter was even quicker and, just as she had almost reached the shelter of the overhanging vines, came a roar that seemed the worst,—the *very* worst noise that Bobby and Tommy had ever heard in all their lives! It was a gun and the sound echoed and reëchoed among the rocks until it seemed to the poor little cats that the noise would never cease! And, then,—oh,—what had hap-

pened to their mother! She lay perfectly still in the tangled thicket, a wide, red gash across her forehead!

Bobby and Tommy no longer felt that they were big, brave cats,—they were lonely and scared and they wanted,—oh, *how* they wanted their mother! The echoes of the gun, though fainter and far off now, made them feel as if this mysterious enemy were all about them. The man-smell and the smell of the gun was the very worst scent they had ever known. Tommy whimpered and Bobby began to wash his dear mother's face with his warm, little tongue, making soft, purry sounds in his throat and shaking her with his paws. She lay very still and Bobby was just ready to give a cry of fear and loneliness when a shiver seemed to pass through the grey, shaggy body he loved so well and she opened her eyes. She was a little dazed at first and then, as she smelled the

smoke and man-smell, she leaped to her feet. Well did she know the danger of staying there one moment and, with an angry snarl to Bobby and Tommy, she leaped back into the forest, bounding and leaping as if her very life depended on her speed, as indeed it did. For the man had jumped across the ravine and was coming up the rocky mountainside as fast as he could scramble. He felt sure that he had hit Mother Lynx, and, although her coat would not be worth very much in the summer, as it was short and thin, nevertheless he wanted to get it. So he climbed up the steep, rocky face of the Ridge as fast as he could. His gun was reloaded and had Mother Lynx not realized her great danger and raced away as fast as she knew how, that would have been the end of her and poor Bobby and Tommy as well. As the gash on her head pained and smarted, Mrs. Lynx gave

short, angry purrs and Bobby and Tommy, close at her heels, answered with frightened, little snarls that told her they were safely bounding along behind her.

Not until they reached old Round-Top did she pause for a breath and then only for an instant to see if the hunter were still coming. Fortunately for her and the little cats, the hunter had given up the chase long before, as well he knew he could not possibly keep up with three leaping, bounding, frightened lynx fleeing for their lives! Quietly, Mrs. Lynx led her children to the safe cavern where they all stretched out. The Hollow Tree House had become too small for them long ago and they now lived in the cave, the stone floor of which was dry and soft with its bed of dead leaves.

Mother Lynx closed her eyes as she lay down on the floor of the cave and, again, Bobby licked the red gash made in her

head by the hunter. Fortunately for Mother Lynx, the bullet had torn only the skin and while it was painful, yet she would be all right in a few days. But there was no breakfast *that* morning, nor did they leave their safe cave that night to go out and hunt! Mother Lynx's head pained almost more than she could bear and every little while, she would get up and pace back and forth in the den, giving short yelps of pain, while poor Bobby and Tommy crouched in the corner, too frightened and worried to move. Never, *never* would they forget that terrible experience which had taught them the man-smell! Bobby felt as if he never would care to hunt or play on the hillside again, nor climb another tree, nor do anything but hide in the cave and neither he nor Tommy believed that the ache would ever get out of their poor, tired legs. But it did and the gash healed up so nicely in

Mother Lynx's forehead, that you would never have known that she had been hurt at all, and so it wasn't very long before they were all climbing and hunting and frolicking in the tangled thicket just the same as ever.

No,—not quite the same. Things soon began to change. Bobby and Tommy did not play together in quite the friendly way they once did when they were very little cats. Tommy was very quarrelsome and many a real fight did he and Bobby have in the cave that seemed to be getting too warm and stuffy in the heat. Bobby began to wish that he could live all alone in the cave,—all by himself. He didn't like to have his mother always calling him and purring over him. He grew quite cross about it and, strange to say, his mother grew cross, too. Sometimes, when he and Tommy were only trying to play with her, she would turn

on them with a snarl and strike at them. Several times she struck with her claws half out and then, poor Bobby and Tommy would each cry with anger. So when,—one midsummer night, as all the Hill was a golden shimmer in the moonlight and when the moccasin plants had covered the hillsides with their pink and yellow slippers, Mrs. Lynx went hunting and never came back,—Bobby didn't care a very great deal. The first day or two he cried a lot and felt very lonely and both he and Tommy did not dare to leave the cave. But, after a *real* fight with Tommy, he felt better about things and went out all by himself and had a delicious supper on top of the Hill.

And so the summer passed and again, it was the Moon of the Falling Leaves, when Jack Frost paints the tips of the sumachs and maples and hickory trees all sorts of gay colors with his silvery paint

brush. Bobby and Tommy began to shed their thin, scraggly, summer coats and put on beautiful winter suits of soft grey with dark trimmings along their legs and backbones. Bobby's coat was especially fine and both had long, thick hair along their sides and flanks to keep them warm when their hunting trips led them through light, fluffy snow. Both Bobby and Tommy had paws so big and broad that they acted just like snowshoes when there was a partial crust on the snow.

About this time, Tommy grew very restless in the cave and he was a very quarrelsome little cat indeed. If Bobby wished to curl up in the Hollow Tree House, Tommy decided that he did, too, and, as the Tree House was not large enough for them both to lie down in very comfortably, they had many a fight over it. Finally, Tommy went away one night and found another hollow tree all for him-

self. Bobby didn't care at all. This, his first winter on Round-Top, was great fun for the little cat, now almost grown up. He loved to hunt in the crisp, sparkling nights. When it became so cold that the moon gleamed green on the glistening hillsides and the North Wind blew the light snow in swirls and eddies across the icy crust, Bobby delighted in taking long trips over the mountain just for pure joy. His thick coat kept him just as warm as a cat needed to be and he was such a successful hunter that the hunger-ache never bothered him all that winter!

CHAPTER VI

BOBBY'S FIGHT WITH THE STRANGER LYNX

THEN, again, Spring swept over old Round-Top, melting the long icicles that hung from the rocks and calling out all the buds and blossoms. Bobby was a beautiful and almost full-grown lynx. He could send such a shrill, piercing cry through the forest that it even made shivers run over old Grandfather Black Bear! No lynx that had ever lived on Round-Top could scream as wildly as that and Grandfather Black Bear stood up and measured himself on a giant pine, to be sure that he was as tall as ever and that his claws were still sharp enough to rip chunks out of the bark. Then he went on hunting sweet, tender roots and grubs.

He had been asleep all winter and had eaten nothing, so that he was very thin; also, he was exceedingly hungry and those roots surely did taste delicious to Grandfather Black Bear. So he decided to go right on hunting grubs and pay no attention to Bobby-cat Lynx.

While Grandfather Black Bear was measuring himself upon the top of old Round-Top, that was exactly what Bobby was doing down by the Hollow Tree House. Low down on its rough, old bark, were the marks that he and Tommy had made when they had first scratched their sharp, little claws on the tree. That was so long ago that Bobby had forgotten all about it and as he stood up against the tall pine, it did not seem possible that *he* had ever made those marks so near the foot of the tree. For,—Bobby's sturdy back legs (higher than his front ones) measured almost nineteen inches high and



Bobby Lynx was nearly grown up and he wore heavy, grayish whiskers on the sides of his jaws. Page 71.

his thick, grey-coated body,—just a bunch of muscles,—was over three feet long. As he stood up against the tree and stretched out his silvery claws, they were almost two inches long! Like a vise, they closed on the tough bark of the tree, crunching right through it and making long, jagged tears almost five feet from the ground!

Bobby-cat was nearly grown up and he wore heavy, greyish whiskers on the sides of his jaws, which really gave him a *very* funny appearance, as if his heavy face, with its wicked-looking teeth, were framed in a grey frame with two sharply-tufted ears at the top of the frame. None of the animals on Round-Top thought him at all *funny*, however. They thought he was the fiercest-looking young warrior they had ever seen and they fled as fast as they could go whenever the wind told them that he was anywhere near them!

And that brought about a condition of things that was almost the end of poor Bobby! Everything was so very much afraid of him and all the little animals just seemed to have grown so very wise that they did not do one foolish thing nor come near enough for him to spring on them!

Mollie Rabbit had a new family of babies in the Hollow Spruce Tree House and Mrs. Woodchuck had a fine new family in her snug burrow, while there were so many new baby field-mice that it was all their poor parents could do to get enough for them to eat! But, nevertheless, Bobby could not get one,—not one! Jimmy Weasel's numerous relatives were so busily engaged in robbing birds' nests and squirrels' homes that they were hardly on the ground long enough for hungry Bobby to get a smell of them! Oh,—how hungry he was, for try as he

might, he could not get one thing for breakfast nor for supper, either! He even broke the rule with which his mother had purred him to sleep and he actually went hunting in the daytime. Not a bit of good did it do him, however, for a little field-mouse caught sight of him and ran chattering away to warn all her family, and the sweet, summer wind carried the scent of him to all the other Forest-people.

That night Bobby lay stretched out on the big beech limb where he had crouched so many times and the hunger-ache in his stomach made him cross and ugly. Every little while, his cruel teeth would snap angrily together as he waited for something to come down the old runway underneath the tree. So hungry was he, that he would have attacked even Grandfather Black Bear himself had he come that way! His thick, stubby tail twitched

angrily as the pain in his stomach grew keener and keener and then,—he stiffened,—scarcely breathing as he caught sight of a dark object slinking along the path. Not a whisker moved as he crouched ready for a spring. Then anger flamed through him and over him, for the animal underneath him was another lynx hunting! Bobby was furious! Didn't he know that this was Bobby's hunting ground? How dared he come here and try to get the breakfast that Bobby hoped to have for himself! Bobby never stopped to see that this was an older and more powerful lynx than he was!

Mad with rage, he just gave a mighty spring that carried him down like a shot right onto the back of the other lynx. As he landed, he tore viciously with all of his terrible claws and, for just one moment, the other lynx seemed crushed to the earth as Bobby ripped and clawed,—

but only for a moment. Rolling over with a powerful twist of his huge, grey body, the Stranger Lynx managed to throw Bobby off and, with a snarl of pain and rage, he struck.

There were long tears now in Bobby's grey coat and places where the fur was no longer grey but a deep, deep red. Over and over they rolled, a snarling, biting, vicious bunch of tearing teeth and ripping claws. Spitting and biting, uttering sharp snarls of rage, they rolled down the hill, bumping into trees and brush, which stopped them only long enough to let them get their breath and then spring back at one another, their cruel claws ripping and tearing viciously. Poor Bobby's legs began to tremble; the slashes he gave with his sturdy forepaws no longer tore the Stranger Lynx so badly. Bobby was fighting a losing fight and *he knew it!* His heart, that at first had throbbed with

rage at this new lynx, now throbbed with fear. His snarls that had been snarls of anger, seemed now to hold a whimper as if he knew that the Stranger Lynx was getting the better of him.

Bobby wanted to stop fighting; he would have liked to run if he had dared, but well he knew that his legs could not carry him far and that the stranger would pounce on him like a cat on a mouse. No,—he must go on fighting. Half blinded by pain and his smarting wounds, he once more struck out viciously with both forepaws. He caught the old lynx off guard and ripped his face from crown to muzzle and then they clinched once more,—a fighting mass of fur and claws, that again rolled down the hill. Hitting against trees, biting and clawing, they rolled right to the top of the rock where once Mother Lynx had watched Jimmy Weasel.



The Stranger-Lynx had slipped, lost his balance and had fallen into the swamp below. Page 77.

Bobby knew that he was near the dear old Hollow Tree House,—if only he could reach it! Both he and the Stranger Lynx had paused an instant for breath,—the big Lynx poised defensively right on the very edge of the rock. Bobby knew he could never reach his safe, warm nest,—he must go on fighting to the end and so, once more he sprang at the big Lynx, striking with all his fast-waning strength.

As the Stranger Lynx gathered himself together to meet the blow, his hind feet slipped off of the edge of the rock,—and, almost before he knew what had happened to him, he had slipped, lost his balance and fallen right down into the swamp below! Without wasting one instant, Bobby turned to run,—not very fast, but as fast as he could. If only he could reach the back-door of the Hollow Tree House before the Stranger Lynx

could climb back up and catch him! Whimpering,—his legs that he had believed so stout and sturdy, wobbling under him, he half-ran, half-crawled to the small hole at the rear of the cave. Painfully he wriggled through it to drop, safe at last, like a little dead cat, on the soft, friendly leaves!

It was very nearly the end of Bobby! His paws that had so proudly clawed their mark on the Hollow Spruce, were now bloody and swollen and his left fore-leg had been so badly torn that the bones showed right through the mangled skin. Bobby's eyes were fast swelling shut, while the blood dripped from the torn and slashed grey coat. Poor Bobby knew that he was a badly hurt little cat, but he did not know that, young as he was, he had almost killed the other lynx,—the largest and wisest old lynx on the mountains! Frightened as he was,

Bobby could not know that the other lynx was even more badly scared, for never had *he* been so badly slashed and torn before! The Stranger Lynx was even now licking his wounds down in the marsh, so badly hurt that it was all he could do to creep and crawl away to his home on the other side of the Ridge! And he was very glad and thankful that this bold, young warrior lynx of Round-Top had not pounced down on him and made an end of him as he lay at the root of the rock!

It was surely too bad that Bobby could not know this as he lay suffering in the cave. How long he stayed there, he did not know, but twice the sun had peeked in through the cracks of the cave and twice had the moon sent golden streaks down on the floor before he was able to crawl out! And he only went then because it seemed to him that he had never wanted a drink of water so badly in all his life!

Painfully he limped and crawled and hobbled down to the spring,—not even twitching his nose as a poor, silly, little rabbit ran right across his path. Not even to cure the cruel hunger-ache that now seemed to *bite* him, so keen was it,—would he try to use those sore, torn muscles of his! Besides,—all he wanted was just a deep, deep drink to cool his hot throat. He lay by the spring a long, long time lapping at the ice cold water and then bathing his hot, swollen paws and legs with his cool, dripping tongue.

It would be many a long day before Bobby would be himself again and always would his face and sides bear the scars of his fierce battle. It was a very lucky thing for poor Bobby that he and all the other members of the Lynx family had been made by Mother Nature so that they could go longer without food than almost any other animal on Round-Top!

This fact stood him in good stead, now, when he was too helpless to pounce on even a tiny field-mouse, and so he did not starve to death as most animals would have done. Instead, he just became so lean and gaunt and so thin that he looked more like a timber wolf than a lynx. Day by day and little by little, the wounds gradually healed. Once more, he could walk without limping and could climb his beloved beech tree. He even grew so well that he again sent his piercing screams through the woodlands, scaring Renny Fox and the weasels into leaving some of their breakfasts for him to eat.

In this way, he managed to get enough to keep him alive and each day he grew stronger and stronger. It was not until it was again time for a new, winter coat, however, that the long slashes and scratches were partly covered up. By that time, it was again the season of the

Harvest Moon, when old King Winter would march back to Round-Top.

Bobby rapidly grew stronger and fatter and his new coat was beautiful to look at. When he again stood up to make his mark on the Hollow Tree House, he was a full-grown lynx,—the largest lynx that the little Forest-people had ever seen!

CHAPTER VII

THE ENEMY BOBBY COULD NOT CONQUER

BOBBY was so big and wise now that he knew all of the forest rules and the scent of every animal on Round-Top. He had only to get a whiff of Mollie Rabbit or Mrs. Woodchuck or a porcupine to know at once what animal it was. The wind told him all the forest secrets.

The wind is the friend of all the little Forest-people and its lessons are among the very first they have to learn. It does not take them long to learn these, for dangers make very good teachers and the little Forest-folk have countless dangers all about them all the time. So they very quickly learn to keep the wind blowing toward them to *bring* them secrets and

not *from* them to carry tales about them. And Bobby had learned this lesson very well and so had the deer and the fox and the bear. The skunk family didn't care very much about this law or any other wood-law, as all the animals are glad to let the skunks very much alone.

But Mollie Rabbit and all her little children had to learn it very well and all the other Forest-laws, too, for it seems as if most all the animals like to have Mollie or some of her family for a meal. So when, one morning, Mollie went hopping up the ravine on Round-Top, looking for some juicy twigs that she knew of, she was very careful to obey all the Forest-laws she knew.

The ravine on Round-Top in winter is one of the most beautiful sights one could wish to see! A small stream, that is fed by many hundreds of large springs on top of the mountain, has cut this ravine

down the steep mountainside, forming very high banks of rocks, at the top of which the pines and the beech trees and the maples grow so close together that the ravine always seems dark and mysterious.

The stream, though narrow, is deep and as it has dashed down the steep hillside, it has formed a series of beautiful cascades one right below another. Old King Winter had seen these waterfalls and knew just how beautiful he and Jack Frost could make them. They had worked together for several bitterly cold days and nights and now, as Mollie hopped up the ravine,—it was like Fairyland! All the spray that the water threw over the branches and twigs of the trees and bushes, Jack Frost had turned into glittering silver, so that each small bush looked like a little brown soldier, carrying hundreds of shining spears. Then Jack had caught each drop of water as it

plunged over the falls and had frozen them all together into great long icicles two or three feet wide. There they hung right from the edge of each rocky ledge and then Jack froze the little creek itself all up so that it could not move an inch!

This morning, the sun had come out and such a sight as Mollie beheld! The long sheets of frozen water and the huge icicles glittered and shone like gold and silver and diamonds. Every spray-covered blade of grass, each little twig, sparkled and gleamed as if all the jewels in the world had been poured into this rocky gorge. Up and up,—as far as Mollie could see, were the glittering things,—clear to the top of the mountain, where some big pines swept their long, green arms down and covered it up. Mollie was puzzled. She had never seen the ravine look like this and she hopped along very cautiously and very much puz-

zled,—her little feet sliding every now and then on the gleaming ice.

Now,—Mollie was sure that she had seen some delicious roots sticking out of these banks but she could not find them. So she hopped along, sniffing and smelling and listening to what the wind was trying to tell her and farther and farther up the ravine she went. Now,—this was a very dangerous thing for a little rabbit to do, for she was in plain sight on the white, gleaming ice and, if any enemy happened to spy her,—what chance would she have in this icy, narrow gorge! But the wind only brought sweet smells of pine and fir and so Mollie hopped along. And then, in the very steepest part of the ravine, right near the edge of the widest, highest waterfall of all, she smelled some delicious roots that, by some chance, had not been covered with ice.

It made Mollie dizzy to look back down

the gorge. Somehow,—it had not seemed so steep as she had climbed up along its sides. So she just turned her back on the glittering, icy sheet that seemed to drop right down to the foot of the mountain and began to eat the sweet roots. Oh, how good they tasted and how pleasant the sun felt on her back. Every few moments she sat up and sniffed and smelled, but there was no danger smell and she went on with her breakfast.

If only the wind could have blown the other way for even just a moment, Mollie would have read a far different message and it would have told her little nose that danger was very close by! Bobby Lynx was also near the beautiful ravine that morning. He had been hunting all night and, as he came to the gorge in the early dawn, its stillness and icy whiteness had puzzled him a little. Until he could just decide whether everything was all right,

he had quickly climbed a grey beech tree and now, as Mollie was eating her breakfast, he was watching her.

Stretched out on a large arm that hung high over the gorge, he looked like a part of the tree itself. Slowly and cautiously, he drew himself together for a spring. So slowly did he move, so quietly, that Mollie's sharp eyes caught not the least movement at all. Bobby had, indeed, grown very wise and he knew exactly how slowly he must move so as not to let Mollie know he was there. One by one, the powerful muscles drew together until, just as Mollie bent down for a fresh nibble, Bobby was ready to spring! Oh,—but he was beautiful and he seemed to know it and his face, with its heavy whiskers, looked very proud and fierce as he gathered himself together and leaped out and down!

Now Bobby was wise and knew all the

Forest-laws and he knew about snow and ice and just how slippery it was for a big cat to walk on. But he had such powerful, tearing claws that he had only to spread them out and drive them in and even the hardest ice had to splinter beneath them. And so, as he leaped, he had no fear of anything happening to *him*! But there were a few things that even he did not know. And he thought of what was going to happen to Mollie and what a toothsome breakfast he would have before he crept home to sleep in the Hollow Tree House.

Down he dropped, like a big, grey stone! Somehow,—Mollie saw him almost as he was upon her! With a shrill, little squeak, she half-jumped, half-slid backward at the exact instant the big claws struck the very spot where she had been. Down Mollie slid, straight down the glittering icicles, falling at last, half-

stunned, to a small ledge far below. But, fortunately for Mollie, she was so little and so light, that the fall did not hurt her and, in an instant, she was darting up the bank and bounding and bouncing home through the pine forest.

But Bobby! Oh,—poor Bobby! He was about to learn another lesson this morning and it would be a very hard one. Mollie had been much nearer the brink of the falls than Bobby had realized. As he struck, his powerful claws dug in the ice, but the force with which he landed swung his heavy body right over the edge. Dig in as best he could, he felt himself slipping—slipping—slipping!

Snarling with rage because here was something that was trying to conquer him, he ripped long furrows in the brittle surface with his forepaws, while his powerful back legs kicked and pushed against the smooth, icy slope over which he hung.

Try as he might, he could not pull himself up. Slowly the weight of his heavy body tore his foreclaws through the ice until, with a wild cry of fright and rage, he shot backward down the icy incline, clawing and scratching vainly at the smooth, shining ice. The small ledge that had saved Mollie only grazed Bobby's side, and over it he shot, faster and faster—down—down until stopped by a big rock that jutted out into the stream far below.

It just seemed to Bobby as if the big, grey rock rose right up and struck him and there he lay!

Poor Bobby! Renny Fox, trotting along the farther bank, stopped and looked across the gorge at him. But Bobby did not see him, for he had hit the rock so hard that he was stunned and dazed. He lay with one foot doubled up under him, afraid to move on this treacherous surface, not daring even to try to

get his leg out from under him, although it pained and hurt him badly. He laid perfectly still for a long time and then he braced himself against the rock and tried to get up. Each time his feet slipped on the ice and he fell back, hurting his leg more and more.

Poor Bobby was frightened! This gleaming, white stuff was an enemy he did not know how to fight. His powerful claws that always tore his other enemies to pieces, had no effect on this smooth, icy foe. Then, as his breath and courage returned, he clung savagely to the rock with his strong right arm and managed to drag himself to his feet. But only three of them could be used,—the fourth was so badly sprained that Bobby whimpered with pain as he tried to stand on it. Slowly and carefully he turned around, keeping close to the rock for fear he might begin to slide again. Then, with slipping,

halting steps he managed to reach the bank! It, too, was icy but the rocks and tree-roots gave him foothold and he slowly climbed up, giving sharp yelps of pain every time he forgot and tried to use his strained foot!

As he reached the top of the high bank, he turned and looked back up the glittering, icy gorge. Then he gave a piercing scream of rage and defiance and limped off through the pine forest to the dear, old Hollow Tree House. He had no breakfast that morning, nor for several mornings until the swelling and pain had left his foot; and never, never would he forget this enemy that he,—the wisest lynx on Round-Top, had failed to conquer!

CHAPTER VIII

THE WORST NIGHT IN BOBBY'S LIFE

MANY of the little Woodland Folk had left Round-Top forever,—driven away by the hunters from the valley settlements, who came to the dear, old Hill with the smoke-smell and the man-smell that Bobby hated so fiercely. Once, as he crept home to the Hollow Tree House, he had seen something bright and glistening lying in the old runway. Bobby stopped and sniffed and, as the keen, winter wind blew toward him, the Glittering Thing smelled of MAN! With a savage snarl, Bobby leaped away from it,—walking around and around it in a wide circle, finally leaving it there as he went, growling and bristling, to his cave. Day after

day, the 'Thing,—a hunter's knife, lay in the path and, day after day, Bobby sniffed and snarled at it, but not once would he touch it. Not even when the snow had rusted it and the wind and rain had all but robbed it of the man-smell, would he go near it. Bobby had learned the man-lesson too well to let even the well-known curiosity of his cat-nature make him forget.

And then came the night that was the very worst time in all Bobby's life,—worse than even that awful morning when he had first smelled the man-smell! Food was getting scarce on Round-Top and besides, Bobby was growing very tired of the old paths and of the Hollow Tree House. He liked to go for long prowls and hunts over on the Ridge and even though the winter wind frequently brought him the hated man-smell, it was so faint and far-off that he knew it did not

spell danger for him,—at least he thought it didn't.

There was good hunting over on the Ridge and many a delicious meal had Bobby managed to get as he had prowled along its rocky sides. The rabbits of the Ridge had not been as well-trained as had Mollie Rabbit's numerous children and they broke all of the rules their mothers had taught them. One night, as Bobby trailed along the Ridge, he came to a little gully opening between some grey-brown beech trees and there, in plain sight on the snow were little tell-tale tracks that told of a foolish little rabbit which had disobeyed her mother and had gone out in the deep snow. Lippity—lippity—they hopped along and Bobby, reading them as plainly as you can read your A B C's, padded softly after. Little Sallie Rabbit had been told again and again not to wander from her Burrow-house when there

was a deep, fluffy snow on the ground because she sank in so deeply in such a snow that she left a very, *very* broad trail behind her for any of her enemies to follow and because she could not hop fast enough in such a snow to escape any danger.

But the night wind had brought *such* delicious smells of clover from the big stores of hay in the barns in the settlement and poor, foolish Sallie simply could not resist them. Farther and farther away she went from the warm, safe Burrow-house, and softly coming after her was Bobby Lynx! Now Sallie was breaking the rule her mother had taught her, but Bobby was breaking the rule he had made for himself—*never* to go near the man-settlement, *never* to leave the safety of his beloved Hill or Ridge! But the rabbit was *such* a fat rabbit and he was *so* hungry and he would *surely* catch her before she reached the

foot of the Ridge and so,—he went on, carefully sniffing at each step. Oh,—such a naughty, disobedient rabbit and such a foolish Bobby Lynx! As Sallie almost reached the foot of the Ridge, the wind changed and blew the other way, bringing to her wiggling little nose the smell of the dreaded enemy slowly coming behind her!

Sallie knew that she could never outrun Bobby in the deep, fluffy snow,—all she could hope to do was to outwit him. Not knowing which way was the best way, not knowing just how she would manage to fool this wise old enemy coming so swiftly behind her, poor Sallie darted to the top of a big rock, leaped from it to another one just below and from that to a big, hollow log lying half-buried in the deep snow. Into it she popped. It was her only hope! Not a whisker moved, not a hair trembled.

Then her body seemed to freeze with fear for she felt Bobby leap lightly on to the log, right over her head! And then,—oh, *what* had happened! Sallie listened in terror, for Bobby Lynx was slashing and crashing around in the snow,—every now and then bumping on the log right over poor little Sallie's head,—now screeching and snarling with pain and rage.

For an instant Sallie listened, then she cautiously stole to the end of the log and peeped out. Bobby was not looking at her at all, but was biting and fighting with something on his forefoot. As Sallie saw her chance to escape, she leaped out and away from the log as fast as she could, scampering up the rocky slopes with longer leaps than she had ever taken in all her life before! Not until she was safely in the warm Burrow-house did her poor heart stop its frightened thumping.

But Bobby,—poor, foolish Bobby was paying heavily for breaking *his* rule. Bobby was caught in a trap that had been concealed right by the log. Had the wind not been blowing *away* from the Ridge, he would surely have smelled the man-smell and never, *never* would he have gone on that log! But here he was, he, the most powerful and wisest warrior of the Hill, caught in a trap like any foolish, young lynx which had never thoroughly learned his lessons! Oh,—if only he had not followed Sallie Rabbit so *far*,—if only he had sprung on her when he had first seen her trail! Of course he could have easily caught her then but, truth to tell, Bobby had *enjoyed* stealing along after her, sure that he could get her whenever he wanted her and so, like any silly house-cat creeping along after a mouse, he had crept after Sallie!

He was the maddest cat ever seen on

the Ridge, madder even than when he had fought the Stranger Lynx and he pulled and jerked at the trap that held his forepaw so firmly. He howled and shrieked and yelled. All thought of the Keep-Quiet Rule was gone! No danger could be worse than this Thing, which, no matter how hard he bit it, would not let go! Then he stopped yelling and snarling and just cried as if he were once more only a little, baby lynx in the Hollow Tree House.

The man at the Farm heard him and got out of bed,—surely that was not the cry of an *animal*,—some child must be lost on the mountain! Dressing and snatching his gun, he called old Shep, the watch-dog, and started for the foot of the Ridge. The cries could still be heard, sobbing, sobbing—now clear—now faint and far-off as if some little, lost child were wandering farther and farther into

the lonely woods. The man broke into a run! The thought of a child out in the deep snow, alone and wandering on the mountainside, made him plunge desperately through the deep, clinging snow. Fainter and fainter came the cries and the man turned helplessly to his dog,—

“Go get ’em, Shep! Hunt ’em out!” At the word, the dog bounded away, the bristles rising on his neck. Shep knew what his master did not know, that it was no child crying up on the Ridge but the howl of an animal, and Shep plunged fearlessly on to “hunt ’em out” just as his master had told him to do.

Bobby’s keen eyes saw him coming long before Shep caught the scent of Bobby and Bobby cowered in terror! Free from this thing that was holding his paw, he would make short work of this dog, big as he was! But Bobby was *not* free and he tore viciously at the trap on his foot as

the dog came nearer and nearer. Had Bobby not been caught in a trap, Shep would never have dreamed of attacking him, brave and courageous as Shep most certainly was! Well did both Shep and Bobby know what would happen, then! But now,—things were different and,—although Bobby knew he could give a good account of himself, even trapped as he was,—nevertheless, even if he killed the dog, it would not free him from this Thing on his paw! As he watched the dog come bounding on, snarls of rage began to purr in his throat,—he would just have to stay there and fight, knowing that it was impossible to escape.

Then his keen eyes saw something out on the Plains that made him give a wild snarl of rage and terror and despair,—a MAN was coming across the snow! Bobby cowered down by the log just for an instant as he realized the hopelessness

of his terrible plight. Then he leaped to his feet, again to bite and scratch at the Thing that held him, now shaking his paw wildly, now tearing at it with his strong teeth.

Now, fortunately for Bobby, the trap that had caught him was only a small steel one fastened to the log that day by a boy who was visiting the Farm and who had never dreamed of catching anything more than a rabbit in it. Fortunately,—*oh* very fortunately for Bobby, the trap had only caught on part of his paw and, almost as Shep reached the rocky hillside, the trap was half-torn, half-slipped off of Bobby's paw! A final wrench by Bobby that hurt his paw cruelly and then,—he was free! With a piercing scream that sounded like a yell of defiance, he darted up the rocky slopes of the Ridge, not minding the pain of his torn paw at all,—leaping lightly from rock to rock,

springing across the gullies, bounding through the snow like a huge, bouncing ball. Never had he leaped and bounded as he did that night and never, *never* had the crest of the Ridge seemed such a desirable haven! He had long ago out-distanced the dog (who was quite glad to have him, brave though old Shep most certainly was!) and he crawled up a big tree, at last, to rest and to examine his paw.

It was not badly hurt,—at least, nothing but what his warm, red tongue would soon heal up. Then he slowly and very happily resumed his journey to the safe woodland paths and familiar runways of old Round-Top. Bobby had learned his lesson,—*never* again would he venture on the Ridge,—and never, *never* would he go so near the settlements again. He would stay on Round-Top as long as he lived, and, as the winter sun crept up over

the crest of the dear old Hill, Bobby climbed into the Hollow Tree House and purred himself to sleep.

Yes, Bobby Lynx had learned his lesson. But foolish, foolish Mollie Rabbit still had hers to learn,—you shall hear some day of her most narrow escape. And the very wisest and slyest fox on all Round-Top — Mother Silver-Tip, — she, too, had some lessons still to learn even while training her family of foxes. She tried so faithfully to teach them,—and Blackie took such a lot of teaching,—really it will require another whole volume to contain all her adventures! You may read them in “MOTHER FOX OF ROUND-TOP.”

THE END

The following pages contain questions
with space for the answers to be written
by

The owner of this book.

OF WHAT DOMESTIC ANIMAL DOES
BOBBY MAKE YOU THINK?

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WHAT KIND OF A HOUSE DID MOTHER
LYNX MAKE?

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WHY DID THE HOME OF THE LYNX
HAVE A BACK DOOR?

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WHY DID BOBBY AND TOMMY HAVE TO
LEARN THE KEEP-QUIET RULE?

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WHY DO MOST CATS SLEEP DURING
THE DAY AND HUNT AT NIGHT?

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WHY DID BOBBY HAVE TO LEARN TO
CLIMB TREES?

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WHAT WARNING DID THE WIND CARRY
TO BOBBY?

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WHAT COLOR WAS BOBBY'S FUR COAT
AND WHY WAS THE FUR LONG IN
WINTER?

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WHY DOES THE LYNX HAVE SUCH
LONG, SHARP CLAWS?

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WHAT FOOD DOES HE LIKE BEST?

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